

EVALUATION SUMMARY



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Office of Policy and Evaluation

Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX)

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the program's impact on FLEX participants: their understanding of democracy and civil society, their willingness and ability to serve as agents of change in their home countries, and their development of enduring ties with Americans.

Key Findings

- **Understanding of Democracy and Civil Society**
 - FLEX alumni are more likely than semi-finalists to believe a Western-style democracy would be better for their country than the current political system (73% vs. 62%).
 - Alumni are more likely than semi-finalists to prefer democracy over strong leadership in their own countries and to disagree with the use of force.
 - During their year in the United States, 55% of alumni participated in student government.
- **Changes in Behavior and Condition**
 - FLEX alumni are more likely than semi-finalists to be paid in U.S. dollars, and those alumni paid in dollars earn 3.5 times more than semi-finalists.
 - Alumni are more self-reliant than semi-finalists: they are more likely to live in their own homes (52% vs. 39%) and more likely to have supported themselves through employment while studying at university (72% vs. 59%).
 - Alumni hold more 'democratic' workplace attitudes than semi-finalists, such as seeking input from, and giving more freedom to, workers they supervise.
- **Development of Enduring Ties**
 - Almost all alumni made formal presentations about their home countries while in the United States (97%).
 - Many alumni (80%) maintain contact with their host families and other FLEX participants while 75% of alumni are still in contact with classmates or friends they met in the United States.
 - Alumni are more likely to have a career plan than semi-finalists, with 80% of alumni able to articulate their desired job status in 5 years compared to 59% of semi-finalists.

Project Information: Aguirre International conducted an assessment of the FLEX Program during April and May 2003. The University of Iowa Social Science Institute collected data by administering face-to-face surveys to 1,159 alumni and 812 semi-finalists from Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Uzbekistan and conducted focus groups with program alumni in each country. The semi-finalists serve as a comparison group to further differentiate the impact that FLEX had on alumni.

Program Information: The FLEX Program, which is the U.S. government's premier youth exchange program, was founded in 1993. Since then, more than 11,000 students from the former Soviet Union have spent an academic year studying in American high schools and living with host families. FLEX provides students with an introduction to civil society, market economics, and democracy, as well as exposure to life in the United States and the culture and values of Americans. Participants are expected to teach Americans about the cultures of their home countries and, upon their return home, teach citizens of their countries about the United States.

Contact Information: For more information regarding this evaluation or to request a copy of this report, please contact the Office of Policy and Evaluation at (202) 632-6325, by email at ECAevaluation@state.gov or by mail at State Annex 5, 2200 C Street NW, Washington, DC 22301.